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ABSTRACT

Intended for high school students, two humanities lessons on India approach India from a "world cultures" perspective. In the first lesson, "Story Scrolls," pairs of students create and present stories from Hindu mythology using traditional methods. The lesson gives content objectives, skills objectives, and evaluation/assessment criteria, as well as background information on India, procedure for the activity, and iconography. In the second lesson, "Project Ganesh," students, working in groups of 3-4, research contemporary issues of importance to India and create a position paper that describes the current situation; examines the history of the issue; and then explores planned actions/changes that will affect the issue in the future. The lesson lists content objectives, skills objectives, and evaluation/assessment criteria, and provides background information and possible research topics. Contains 14 annotated references and selected resources. (BT)

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CURRICULUM PROJECTS DEVELOPED BY 1998 SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

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30 October, 1998

Ms. Rajni Nair, American Program Director
Fulbright House
12 Hailey Road
New Delhi 110001
India

Dear Rajni:

It's cold and wet here, and the summer seems very distant, but working on this project has brought back many memories. I am enclosing a copy of two extended activities that are part of a unit on India. Please let me know if any other documentation is needed.

Thank you again for the lovely table cloth and all of the help you gave during my visit. Please extend my thanks to the many people at Fulbright House who made my experience in India so valuable.

Sincerely,

Marion A. Makin

Marion Makin India Fulbright '98
Selections from a Humanities unit on India

At my high school, students in grades 9-11 enroll in Humanities, a double credit class that meets for two periods each day. This team taught class integrates social studies and English. My 9th grade students study India as part of their World Cultures Humanities block. Although the focus is on contemporary cultures, the ancient world is also studied. The following activities represent some of the projects they do as part of their study.

I.Story scrolls

Activity:

Pairs of students create and present stories from Hindu mythology using traditional methods.

Content Objectives:

Students:
become familiar with major Hindu deities and stories
gain awareness of the oral tradition of storytelling in a variety of cultures
become aware of styles of Indian art (see description of activity below)

Skill Objectives:

Students will be able to:
distinguish detail from main idea
summarize from a variety of sources
make presentation utilizing visual aides
work successfully in a small group
transfer information from one medium to another
use oral presentation skills effectively

Evaluation/Assessment:

Student oral presentations should be evaluated on content and presentation. Retelling of stories should be clear, well organized, and accurate. Excellent retellings indicate good understanding of the story and the ability to recognize significant events. Presentation should be lively, interesting, and effectively incorporate visual material (the story scrolls).

The scrolls themselves should show the key elements of the story. If the students are familiar with elements of representation, drawings should reflect these patterns.

Background:
More than half of India's population lives in villages throughout the country. Although conditions are changing, many are still isolated due to weather and/or road conditions, and many are very poor. Until recently, literacy rates in the villages were low, and still remain lower than the national average. A strong oral tradition of story developed in response to these conditions. The spreading presence of television (even if this means one to a village) is rapidly changing what was, until recently, a traditional pattern of entertainment and communication of a cultural legacy.

Stories, frequently about the various Hindu divinities, were told in a variety of ways, including puppet shows using stock characters, plays, and through the use of story scrolls. These scrolls are picture panels, somewhat like comic strips, painted vertically on rolls of paper. As the story teller chants the story, he unrolls the scrolls, pointing to the accompanying picture highlight to illustrate that part of the story.

Procedure:
Working in pairs or individually, students create scrolls illustrating Hindu myths and use these to tell these stories to the class or to younger students.

Either supply students with stories from Hindu mythology or have them research and find their own. Key scenes from the "Ramayana" or the "Mahabharata," recounted in a number of texts, would work well here. As they read the stories, ask students to determine the key scenes. These are the ones that will be illustrated in their story scrolls. Students will also create a script to tell the accompanying story.

Depending on how much time is available, this project can also be a good introduction to Indian art and iconography. Many gods have particular objects associated with them. Their presence identifies the god in the story. Some of the more common figures and items are discussed below. Have students study examples of Indian painting and sculpture to see how the gods are represented.

Iconography

Durga-see Parvati

Ganesh (Ganesa)-the son of Parvati, Ganesh is worshipped as the god of new beginnings and one who removes obstacles (but can also create them). He has the head of an elephant, and rides on a rat.

Hanuman-the giant monkey king who helps Rama defeat Ravana. He is a popular figure who represents courage and dedication.

Kali-see Parvati

Krishna-one of the ten manifestations of Vishnu, Krishna is the subject of many stories. He is shown as a mischievous child, a young cowherd, and later, a lover with thousands of wives (his favorite was Radha). Krishna is dark, the color of the storm clouds, and frequently wears a yellow costume with a peacock feather. He sometimes holds a flute.

Lakshmi-wife of Vishnu, goddess of wealth and luxury. She is associated with the lotus, and is often shown holding a lotus in her hand.

lotus-frequently associated with the gods. The lotus of creation grows from the navel of Vishnu. Brahma sits on the flower. The lotus also symbolizes time and age or state of life. It fully opens during the day, so the open flower is a symbol of maturity. The delicate flower is also rooted in the swampy earth, a reminder of connection.

lotus position-the position of enlightenment and meditation, used symbolically for gods and mortals.

multiple arms-indicates a deity. This is confusing to students, who think the gods are meant to be monstrous. In fact, this is symbolic, not literal, and represents the enormous power of the gods compared to mortals.

parasol-indicates royalty or divinity

Parvati (Durga, Kali)-wife of the god Siva, she is the divine mother. She represents female energy, and is presented in two ways, one mild and one full of fury. Many names are connected with this fierce side, particularly Durga and Kali. Durga is commonly represented with 10

arms, symbolizing her great strengths. Her arms hold weapons and a disk representing the earth. She is beautiful but frightening, frequently yellow, and rides on a tiger. Kali is the most furious manifestation of energy. Kali is black, bloody, and surrounded with snakes and skulls.

Siva (Shiva)-the destroyer, but paradoxically, the symbol of divine energy. Siva is shown in a variety of ways. He has a blue throat, and is often seated on a tiger skin. His mount is the bull, Nandi. Siva has four hands and carries a bow, an hour-glass shaped drum, and a skull capped club. He has a third eye, and a mermaid, representing the sacred river Ganges, is in his long hair. He is associated with the crescent moon. He frequently has a necklace of skulls and snakes.

Vishnu-part of the Hindu triad, Vishnu, the supreme being, encompasses Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the organizer or preserver, and Siva, the destroyer. He has ten avatars, or manifestations: a fish, a tortoise, a wild boar, a man-lion, a dwarf, a warrior, Rama, Krishna, and Buddha. The tenth avatar, Kalki, the white horse, has not yet appeared. Each of these avatars is the subject of many stories.

As the preserver , Vishnu is handsome, frequently dressed in dark blue, and rides an eagle, Garuda. His four hands hold a conch, a club, the chakra (disk), and a lotus. He is associated with a giant serpent.

Marion Makin Fulbright '98
Selections from a Humanities unit on India
II. Project Ganesh

Activity:
Working in groups of 3-4, students research contemporary issues of importance to India and create a position paper that a)describes the current situation, b)examines the history of the issue, and c)researches planned actions/changes that will affect the issue in the future. In addition, they are to create a poster listing the key points of their study to share with students in other areas. Students are encouraged to consult with other research groups to look for connections between issues.

This project is not an attempt to create solutions to address these issues, although that would be an excellent follow-up activity. Rather, the emphasis is on students seeing the link between the past and the present, on recognizing that contemporary issues have long and complicated historical roots, and understanding that effective actions must be consistent with cultural values. It is useful as preparation for a model international forum or model UN.

Content Objectives:
Through this project, students become aware of the complexity of the issues affecting India and other nations at the end of the twentieth century. They will use critical thinking skills to evaluate issues and will gain an understanding and appreciation of diverse values.

Skills Objectives:
Students will practice the following skills:

- critical reading and thinking
- research
- summarizing key ideas
- evaluating ideas
- paraphrasing ideas
- expository writing (position paper)
- memo writing (poster)
- group communication

Evaluation/Assessment:
There are many elements to this assignment. Areas to consider in evaluation of research and the research paper include the following:

- has the student used a variety of credible sources?
- does paper integrate information clearly, consistently, and effectively?
- is information correctly cited?
- does discussion indicate a good understanding of issues?
- is organization of information effective?
- does discussion stay on topic?
- does paper use correct format and conventions?
- do research notes follow correct format?

The purpose of the key points poster is to present information in brief, readable memo format. It will enable groups to share research in a time efficient manner. Areas to consider in evaluation of the poster include:

- is poster clear?
- are key points presented briefly but accurately?
- does poster summarize essential information?

Background

Ganesh is the god of new beginnings and overcoming obstacles. People pray to Ganesh at the start of an endeavor. As it enters the 21st century, India has obstacles to overcome and traditions to continue. While maintaining its cultural identity, India is also in the process of making changes to improve the lives of its people.

Research topics

status of women

The changing status of women began before independence. While women are now represented at all levels of government and education, the status of women, especially illiterate women, is not equal to men. Laws do not apply equally to women, and in many areas women cannot own land. There is disparity in the view of work done by men and women. 3/4 of the work men do is paid; 1/3 or women's work is paid. The current government is debating a "women's bill" but has not taken action on it. Historically, what was the status of women, on what was it based, and how is it changing?

education

India has made enormous strives in education since independence, but it still faces many problems. Schools are less available in rural areas than in urban, gender parity has not been achieved, low teacher salaries discourage strong applicants, and the diverse needs of different geographical and cultural areas has not been fully addressed.

Government cuts in spending exacerbate the problems. What is the current state of education in India, and what is India's plan for the future of education?

health and medicine
This issue is closely related to population, education, and environment. India is a diverse nation of close to a billion people. Traditional beliefs are sometimes at odds with modern science. What are the primary issues relating to health and medicine in India today? How is India providing for the health of its people? How are people being made aware of health issues?

defense
India's nuclear defense tests last spring were criticized by many countries of the world, but many in India saw it as a necessary action. How does India justify nuclear testing, and what is its plan for the future?

population growth
With 950 million people, one person out of six is Indian. Population growth is low among the well educated, but continues to be high in other areas of the society. How is India addressing this problem and the pressures it puts on social services, the environment, and the economy?

religion
The majority of the population is Hindu, but numerous minority religions include Muslims, Christians, and Sikhs. There are many Hindu sects with differing beliefs. What explains the current religious makeup of India? How are different religions treated? What implications does religion have for social and government policy?

child labor
It is easy to condemn child labor, but advocates of children learning traditional skills argue that the economy of the individual and the family is improved as a result. What is the situation regarding child labor in India today? Should it be changed?

agriculture
In the last 30 years the green (agricultural) and white (dairy) revolutions have changed India from a nation that imports food to one that exports. India is the second largest dairy producer in the world. However, although some regions are very successful, others continue

to be in need. How has the structure of India's agriculture changed? What is India doing to continue its progress?

international relations
As one of the world's two most populous nations, India is an important world figure. What are India's relations within its region and the world?

relations with Pakistan
India and Pakistan were once united, but have had a history of hostility since independence. Why did Pakistan emerge as a separate nation at independence? What issues have created tension between the two nations? What are India's current relations with Pakistan?

regionalism
India is a land of physical and cultural contrasts. Regions are characterized by their own language (approximately one thousand languages and dialects are recognized), economies, needs, and traditions. Research and discuss some of India's many regions. How can India emerge as a unified nation when there is so much diversity?

environment
Closely related to health, population, and education. Although modern technology is usually seen as positive, as it replaces traditional practices technology adds to pollution problems. Delhi is the second most polluted city in the world (Mexico City is first). Vehicles account for 64% of Delhi's air pollution. The Ganges, the holiest of rivers, is polluted. Offerings in plastic bags have replaced the flowers and leaves used in earlier times. The growth of cities adds to the problems. Resources to combat this problem are limited. What is India doing to address this important issue? What are its priorities?

legacy of caste system
The caste system is no longer apparent in cities, but it is still felt in the nation. India's system of reservation for the "scheduled castes" (similar to affirmative action in the US) has opened up opportunities that previously did not exist. However, many people agree that the needs of what were traditionally "lower" castes are still underrepresented in politics and education. What is the basis of India's caste system? Is it influential today?

Annotated References and Selected Resources

Story Scroll section:

Campbell, Joseph. The Power of Myth. New York: Doubleday, 1988.
A comparison of mythical patterns common to many cultures.

Dowson, John. A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion. New Delhi: Rupa and Co, 1997.
Useful for brief overviews of names and ideas associated with Hindu beliefs.

Goswamy, B.N. "Indian Art: Multiple Layers and Varying Intensities," lecture. New Delhi, August 5, 1998.
Part of the India "98 Fulbright program. Not available, although the presenter has many published works.

Literature: World Masterpieces. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1991.
Contains excerpts from classical and twentieth century Indian literature.

Punja, Shobita. "Visual Arts of India," lecture. New Delhi, July 7, 1998.
Part of the India "98 Fulbright program. Not available, although the presenter has many published works.

Rosenberg, Donna. World Mythology. Chicago: NTC, 1990.
A readable source for the retelling of a variety of myths.

Project Ganesh section:

Center for Science and Environment. www.oneworld.org/cse
An Indian organization which offers information on environment, resources, and publications.

"Down to Earth" a science and environment fortnightly. New Delhi: Society for Environmental Communications.
Readable magazine of the Center for Science and Environment. Magazines cover a variety of issues. Some special student supplements are available.

Dube, S.C. Indian Society. New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1996.
Includes information on many facets of India.

Finlay, Hugh, et.al. India: a Lonely Planet travel survival kit. Oakland: Lonely Planet Publications, 1996.
Summarized information on history, religion, government, and culture.

"From a Drop to a Flood." Anand, India: National Dairy Development Board, March, 1987.
Information on India's successful dairy program.

India98. http://home.att.net/~tisone/india98.html

A web site created by two participants in the India '98 Fulbright program, this contains a variety of pictures and information.

Naipaul, V.S. India: a Million Mutinies Now. New York: Penguin Books, 1990.
Traces the complex history of many movements in India.

"Ripples and Rainbows" (the newsletter of the Loreto Day School). 122, A.J. Ch. Bose Rd. Calcutta 14.
The Loreto School has an outreach program for street children and a special program for training teachers in rural schools. These newsletters contain letters and anecdotes from present and former students and teachers.